

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-09 H-02

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15

USIA-12 IO-12 AID-20 DPW-01 SR-02 ORM-03 RSR-01 /143 W
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R 110942 Z APR 73

FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8731

INFO AMEMBASSY DACCA

AMEMBASSY KABUL

AMCONSUL KARACHI

AMCONSUL LAHORE

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ISLAMABAD 2946

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PK, IN, BG

SUBJ: INDO/ PAK/ BANGLADESH RELATIONS: VIEWS OF GOP MINISTER
OF STATE

SUMMARY: ACCORDING MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENSE AND
FOREIGN AFFAIRS, BHUTTO CLEARLY UNDERSTANDS NEED TO
RECOGNIZE BANGLADESH AND IS CONSIDERING ADDITIONAL MEASURES
SELL RECOGNITION TO POPULACE. RE FURTHER IMPLEMENTATION
SIMLA AGREEMENT, GOP FEELS BALL IN INDIA'S COURT AND THAT
NEXT STEP SHOULD BE REPLY BY PRIMEMIN GANDHI TO BHUTTO'S
FEBRUARY LETTER PROPOSING MEETING BETWEEN THE TWO. WHILE
GOP PREPARED MOVE AHEAD WITH PROPOSED EXCHANGES OF
DESTITUTE BENGALLEES AND DEPENDENTS OF DETAINEES, PAKS
ARE RELUCTANT TO ENTERTAIN SUGGESTION FOR UNILATERALLY
RELEASING ADDITIONAL BENGALLEES BECAUSE OF POTENTIALLY
ADVERSE DOMESTIC REACTION. MINISTER GAINED IMPRESSION
FROM MARCH VISIT TO US THAT AMERICAN OPINION NOW MORE
FAVORABLE TO PAKISTAN AND INCREASINGLY DUBIOUS ABOUT
BANGLADESH. END SUMMARY

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1. DURING COURSE OF MY APRIL 9 MEETING WITH MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENSE AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS, AZIZ AHMED, HE REVIEWED AT SOME LENGTH CURRENT STATE OF INDO/ PAK/ BANGLADESH AFFAIRS. MOST OF HIS COMMENTS REFLECTED KNOWN GOP POSITIONS, BUT WITH ADDITIONAL DETAILS ON CURRENT THINKING AND IN SOME CASES DIFFERENT EMPHASIS.

2. AHMED SAID THAT BHUTTO WAS NOT WORRIED ABOUT POSSIBLE OPPOSITION WITHIN ARMY TO RECOGNITION BANGLADESH. HIS CONCERN WAS WITH POPULACE AS WHOLE, PARTICULARLY IN PUNJAB WHERE FEELING AGAINST RECOGNITION IS WIDESPREAD. GOP WAS NOW CONSIDERING WHAT NEW MEASURES MIGHT BE TAKEN TO PREPARE POPULACE FOR RECOGNITION, PERHAPS INCLUDING SPEAKING TOUR OF PUNJAB BY PRESIDENT. SPEAKING WITH EMPHASIS, AHMED SAID THAT " THE PRESIDENT IS CLEAR IN HIS MIND THAT WE MUST RECOGNIZE BANGLADESH" AND THAT RECONCILIATION WITH INDIA WAS ESSENTIAL.

3. GOP FELT, HOWEVER, THAT BALL WAS NOW IN PRIMIN GANDHI'S COURT, AHMED CONTINUED, AND DID NOT INTEND ANY FURTHER INITIATIVE UNTIL SHE RESPONDED TO BHUTTO'S LATEST LETTER. IN RESPONSE MY QUESTIONS, HE REVIEWED CURRENT STATE OF EXCHANGES BETWEEN PRIMEMIN AND PRESIDENT. PRIMEMIN HAD SENT LETTER TO BHUTTO IN FEBRUARY RESPONDING TO HIS MESSAGE OF CONGRATULATIONS IMMEDIATELY AFTER COMPLETION OF TROOP WITHDRAWALS IN DECEMBER. PRIMEMIN'S LETTER HAD AGREED THAT POW ISSUE MUST BE RESOLVED BUT POINTED OUT GOI MUST TAKE FEELINGS OF BANGLADESH INTO CONSIDERATION. IT SUGGESTED THAT OTHER " PERIPHERAL QUESTIONS" MIGHT MEANWHILE BE EXPLORED. LETTER CONCLUDED BY ASKING " IN STRICTEST CONFIDENCE" FOR BHUTTO'S VIEWS ON HOW THE TWO GOVERNMENTS MIGHT PROCEED ON POW ISSUE.

4. BHUTTO'S REPLY TO THIS LETTER, ALSO IN FEBRUARY, STRESSED THAT FURTHER MOVES IN OTHER FIELDS WERE NOT FEASIBLE UNTIL POW ISSUE SETTLED. ON POWS, PRESIDENT SUGGESTED THAT PRIMEMIN EITHER TAKE DECISION TO REPATRIATE THEM, WHICH WOULD MAKE IT MUCH EASIER FOR BHUTTO TO PROCEED WITH RECOGNITION, OR IF PRIMEMIN UNABLE TAKE THIS STEP, " LET'S GET TOGETHER" TO DISCUSS MATTER PERSONALLY. LETTER DID NOT SPECIFY WHERE MEETING MIGHT TAKE PLACE BUT, SINCE PREVIOUS MEETING HAD BEEN IN INDIA, PAKISTAN
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SITE WAS IMPLIED. THIS DID NOT CONSTITUTE FORMAL

INVITATION FOR MEETING, AHMED CONCEDED, BUT IT UNMISTAKABLY PROPOSED MEETING.

5. FAR AS PAKISTAN CONCERNED, AHMED CONTINUED, NEXT STEP AWAITED INDIAN RESPONSE TO THIS LETTER. I OBSERVED THAT HAKSAR'S MISSION TO DACCA SEEMED TO SUGGEST MOVEMENT ON GOI SIDE TO FIND WAY OUT OF DEADLOCK. WE DID NOT KNOW SPECIFICS OF HIS MISSION, I ADDED, BUT IT DID APPEAR TO BE CLEAR INDIAN INITIATIVE. WE HAD SEEN NO INDICATIONS OF ANY BREAKTHROUGH AS RESULT HAKSAR VISIT BUT PERHAPS THERE HAD BEEN SOME PROGRESS. AHMED RESPONDED THAT, IF SO, PERHAPS GOI WOULD NOW FEEL CONSTRAINED TO REPLY TO BHUTTO LETTER.

6. EMPHASIZING THAT I WAS SPEAKING ON STRICTLY PERSONAL BASIS, I ASKED WHETHER IT WOULD NOT BE POSSIBLE FOR PAKISTAN TO TAKE SOME IMAGINATIVE STEP TO HELP BREAK THIS IMPASSE. I NOTED THAT OUR EMBASSY IN DELHI HAD HAZARDED OPINION THAT INITIATIVE FROM PAKISTAN SIDE WOULD HAVE GOOD EFFECT IN DELHI. RECALLING THAT I HAD RAISED SUBJECT BEFORE, I SAID I WOULD LIKE ONCE AGAIN TO ASK WHETHER GOP MIGHT CONSIDER POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF TAKING LEAD BY RE-LEASING AT LEAST SOME OF BENGALEE DETAINEES IN PAKISTAN -- FOR EXAMPLE, THE FORMER CIVILIAN GOP OFFICIALS.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ISLAMABAD 2946

7. IN RESPONSE, AHMED FIRST REVIEWED STATE OF PLAY IN CURRENT NEGOTIATIONS TO EXCHANGE 6,000 PAKISTANI DEPENDENTS IN INDIA FOR 15,000 BENGALLEES IN PAKISTAN. HE SAID GOP HAD JUST LEARNED FROM UN SOURCES THAT MUJIB HAD CABLED UNSYG AGREEING TO TAKE THE 15,000 AND SPECIFYING THAT THEY MUST COME BY SEA. LATTER WAS AGREEABLE TO GOP. ON OTHER HAND, GOP HAS NEVER BEEN PROVIDED EVEN PARTIAL LIST OF THE 6,000 PAKISTANIS TO BE RELEASED BY INDIA. AS TO REPATRIATION OF ALL REMIANING BENGALLEES IN PAKISTAN, AHMED CONTINUED, BHUTTO WOULD BE UNABLE TAKE SUCH AN IMPORTANT STEP WITHOUT SUPPORT OF THE PEOPLE. IF HE WERE TO LET BENGALLEES GO WITHOUT ADEQUATELY PREPARING CITIZENRY, THERE WOULD LIKELY BE " AN IRRATIONAL REACTION, ESPECIALLY IN THE PUNJAB". I COMMENTED THAT BHUTTO WAS VERY TALENTED MAN AND THAT I THOUGHT THAT HE MIGHT BE ABLE TO MANAGE IT.

8. FURTHER COMPLICATING SITUATION, AHMED CONTINUED, WAS QUESTION OF NON- BENGALLEES IN BANGLADESH. GOP BELIEVED BEST WAY TO WORK OUT BOTH THIS PROBLEM AND THAT OF BENGALLEES IN PAKISTAN WAS TO DISCUSS MATTER WITH GBD BE-
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FOREHAND. MUJIB, HOWEVER, WANTED TO DEPORT BIHARIS AND GET BACK BENGALLEES WITHOUT DISCUSSIONS. THIS MOST UNFORTUNATE, AHMED SAID, BECAUSE ONCE PAKISTAN AND BANGLADESH WERE ABLE TO REACH ACCOMMODATION, IT WAS QUITE POSSIBLE THAT NUMBER OF BIHARIS AND BENGALLEES WOULD NOT WISH TO TRANSFER.

9. RETURNING TO SUBJECT OF RECOGNITION, I OBSERVED THAT IT WOULD HAVE MOST FAVORABLE IMPACT ON PUBLIC OPINION IN US IF QUESTION WERE RESOLVED BEFORE BHUTTO' S FORTHCOMING VISIT TO US. AHMED DID NOT RESPOND DIRECTLY BUT COMMENTED THAT HIS IMPRESSION FROM VISIT TO US LAST MONTH WAS THAT THERE HAD BEEN GOOD DEAL RETHINKING ABOUT BANGLADESH IN US PRESS AND CONGRESS. LESS EMPHASIS WAS BEING GIVEN TO PAST " ALLEGED MISTREATMENT" OF BANGLADESH BY PAKISTAN AND TO CIRCUMSTANCES UNDER WHICH BANGLADESH WAS CREATED. WITH BANGLADESH IN PRESENT PARLOUS STATE, HE BELIEVED SOME AMERICANS WERE BEGINNING TO WONDER " WHETHER THIS HAS BEEN THE BEST POSSIBLE SOLUTION". HE EXPECTED THAT FREE WORLD WOULD ONE DAY COME TO REALIZE THAT SPECIAL RELATIONS BETWEEN PAKISTAN AND BANGLADESH WERE IN ITS INTERESTS, ESPECIALLY IN LIGHT OF " SOVIET MACHINATIONS". WE KEEP TRYING TO SEEK BETTER RELATIONS WITH BANGLADESH, AHMED COMPLAINED, BUT MUJIB REFUSES TO COOPERATE.

10. CONCLUDING, AHMED REFERRED BRIEFLY TO NEW BANGLADESH FOREIGN MINISTER KAMAL HOSSAIN AS " A BALANCED MAN" .
BHUTTO WAS PERSONALLY WELL ACQUAINTED WITH HIM, AHMED SAID, AND HE HAD HEARD THAT HOSSAIN AT ONE TIME HAD EVEN WANTED TO JOINING BHUTTO' S PEOPLES PARTY.
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